

ENGLISH-KIKUYU DICTIONARY

Compiled by

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Edited by

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CAPE TOWN IBADAN NAIROBI DAR ES SALAAM LUSAKA ADDIS ABABA
DELHI BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS KARACHI LAHORE DACCA
KUALA LUMPUR SINGAPORE HONG KONG TOKYO

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PREFACE

THERE are very few missionaries of his generation who could be given the same credit as Ruffell Barlow for the understanding of another people's language, without that detailed training in linguistics regarded as necessary to-day. He not only spoke Kikuyu, but he also attempted to penetrate the life of the people in their dances and songs, at a time when such activities were not encouraged.

I believe he had the honour of conjuring up that magic sentence which provides a clue to much of the political unrest and discontent among the Kikuyu, and which is eloquently descriptive of the mysterious hold which the land has over them. It was in this land that he lost his wife by his first marriage. The description first appeared in a small Kikuyu Reader 'Tūthomo Twa Gīgīkūyū':

"Ngai nīaheete Gīkūyū būrūri mwega ūtaagaga māi kana irio kana gīthaka; wega no Gīkūyū kīgocage Ngai mūno, nī ūndū anagītanahīra mūno." (God gave the Kikuyu a good land lacking neither water nor crops nor area for cultivation; it is fitting therefore for the Kikuyu people to praise God immensely for his great generosity towards them.)

Because of his knowledge of the language he started the compilation of an English-Kikuyu Dictionary, and had reached the letter 'M' when other preoccupations, including return to Kenya during the Mau Mau Emergency, made it necessary for him to lay it aside for a number of years. In 1962 an approach to the East African Literature Bureau in the hope of obtaining a grant towards publication, followed by the submission of a few specimen pages to the Clarendon Press did not meet with any success, and the MSS had to lie idle for a further period. By 1965 it became clear that failing health would not allow him to complete the work which had reached the letters 'TH'. It was at this point that, at the request of Mrs Barlow, Mr Godfrey Benson agreed to take over the unfinished MSS with the hope of completing it and editing the whole dictionary for publication, in the midst of many other activities at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University.

Mr Barlow died on the 10th October 1965. His ashes were taken to Kenya in accordance with the wishes of many of his Kenya friends and students, and in particular the Presbytery of Tumutumu, where he had been the first missionary to live on the hill. Mrs Perpetua W. Kaigwa, daughter of the Rev. James Gathigi, of the same Presbytery, and myself, attended the funeral service in Edinburgh where we were both attending a Conference.

During the following years Mr Benson had the help of several Kikuyu studying in England, in particular Dr Godfrey Mūriūki and Mr B. Mūrage,

who took great interest in the work of dictionary-making. Johnson's English-Swahili Dictionary had been originally used as a base, but this only included words in common usage. Modern additions, which might have been collected had the Editor been able to spend time in Kenya, had for the most part to be disregarded. While this lack is regretted it will, we hope, be remedied by future Kikuyu scholars, who will also decide whether to continue with the present spelling-form or adopt another.

Such a dictionary can only be regarded as a starting-point should Kikuyu themselves feel the need for revision in the future. With the greater emphasis on Swahili as the national language a work such as this will remain as a masterpiece for scholars should the language itself be discontinued. But in the light of the resurgence of older languages, such as we see in the modern world, that day may come later than some would dare to predict.

Mr Barlow certainly did not belong to my generation, so I may be excused for not having had as much contact with him during his active days in Kenya as I would have wished. But there are thousands of people who still remember him. Some have taken the name 'Baru', and many are the stories told about him, especially around Tumutumu and Thogoto.

Here then are the results, of the untiring devotion of a man who tried to be of service to the people of another tongue and background, now preserved and made available for present and future generations, for all who care to study the language.

JOHN GATU

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Church of East Africa

EDITOR'S NOTE

THE orthography used in this Dictionary is that which was followed in the Kikuyu-English Dictionary (Clarendon Press, 1964). Where necessary references are made to the distinction between words of the same spelling as shown in that dictionary.

Very few alterations have been made to the MSS left by Mr Barlow. The Editor's task has been mainly one of arrangement for consistency, and the filling of gaps left by the original compiler when he was unable through illness to complete his work.

Nouns derived from verbs have been listed under the heading of the verb, except where they are identical in shape, in which case they are listed separately, to avoid confusion. Derived words are listed sometimes under the basic verb and sometimes under the noun or adjective, to fit in with the formations in Kikuyu. Feminine forms come under masculines, adverbs derived from adjectives under the primary adjective. Words of identical shape but differing in meaning are entered under separate heads.

Special thanks are due to Mrs Dorinda Kirby of Oxford who, though knowing nothing of the language, willingly undertook, with great accuracy, the laborious task of typing out the thousands of slips in preparation for printing.

ABBREVIATIONS AND SIGNS

a.	adjective
adv.	adverb
arch.	archaic, not modern usage
arith.	arithmetical term
aux.	auxiliary verb
Bibl.	Biblical term
biol.	biological term
coll.	colloquial usage, slang
conj.	conjunction
e.g.	for example
fig.	figurative usage
geog.	geographical term
ideo.	ideophone
leg.	legal term
mil.	military term
neg.	negative
N.K.	current in Northern sections of Kikuyu country
pa.t.	past tense
pa.ppl.	past participle
pl.	plural
prep.	preposition
rel.	religious usage
relat.	relative
R.C.	Roman Catholic usage
s.	singular
sb.	somebody
sth.	something
v.t.	verb transitive
v.i.	verb intransitive
/	alternative form or spelling
~	repetition of head word
~	above a Kikuyu word refers to distinctions between words of similar shape in the Kikuyu-English Dictionary
~	before an adjective or verbal piece denotes absence of the class prefix
~	stress mark on a syllable in an English word where noun and verb spelt alike are distinguishable by stress, as in:-
~	cóntest n. contést v.t.
~	short vowel as in kín
~	long vowel as in kíne

A

a, a, (indef. article) ní koigo gatangi-taúrika Ugi kúyú tiga o ríria kaaringana na imwe: <i>bring ~ knife</i> (kahiú kamwe o karíkú gatarí ga gíkúúranwo na türía tüní). Níngí kahúthagiřúo gíkigwetwo gakundi hamwe, ta ~ pair of shoes, ~ dozen, ~ herd, ~ lot, ~ quantity (of flour, &c.)
an, ni ündú ümwe na a, tiga ati haría koigagířúo ní mbere ya ciugo iria ciambagířirio na a, e, i, o kana u, ta ~ axe, ~ egg, &c. Haría u igambagio yu, na haria o igambagio wo, a ndigá-rürükaga. Handú hangí an yugagwo ní haría kiugo gíkwambířirio na h itarí ya kúgambio, ta one hour. No hamwe na üguo níkwíragwo ~ horse, ~ use, ~ euphorbia, ~ ewe, &c. (Ríria kindú gíkwendwo gíkúúranwo na iria ingí cia múthembá müna ní the itúmagířúo handú h a.)
aback, adv. na thutha; be taken ~, tuíkira, maka, tuíka nda.
abandon, v.t. (desert) te, ta, tiganíria, teaníria; (stop doing) tiga; (give up in despair or disgust) tirika; ~ a place, thema, ~ a fellow-traveller, rekia njíra; ~ to, tigira; ~ sb. to his fate, rekereria; ~self to, irekereria. abandoned, a. (deserted) -thame; (profligate) -túriku, -gegenyúku, -gaganyúku, -aganu; ~homestead, igango, kíganjo.
abandon, n. njaci, gícací.
abase, v.t. nyarara, húthia, nyihia, conorithia, cibikania; ~self, inyihia.
abash, v.t. conorithia, iguithia thoni, ikira njono, gúnyithia, gaagaiithia.
abate, v.t. nyihanyihia, nyihia hinya wa, húahúithia, húthahúthithia, horahoria, húthia. v.i. nyihanyihia, nyihia, húa, húahúa, horahora, húthahúthia.
abattoir, n. gíthinjíro, handú hathí-njagířúo ng'ombe kana mbúri.
abbot, n. münene wa múcii wa abatíri.
abbess, n. mütumia münene wa múcii wa a-mwari.
abbreviate, v.t. híhíla, tinatinia (kiugo kana ühoro). abbreviation, n. kiugo gitinatinie.
abdicate, v.i. (of king, queen &c.) uma ünene-iní. abdication, n. kuuma ünene-iní.
abdomen, n. nda; (lower) kínená.
abdominal, a. -a nda, -koníi nda.
abduct, v.t. iya mündú na hitho kana hinya ütari wa kihootho (makíria mündú-wa-nja), kíria.
abet, v.t. teithia, teithiríria.
abeyance, n. be in ~, kwaga gwíkířúo hinya (ta watho), gúcuuro.
abhor, v.t. thúúra múnó, thúúra ithika, nyira, iríra ngoro. abhorrence, n. rúthúúro kinene, kínyiko.
abide, v.t. itíria, itíiríria, ümíríria, eterera. v.i. ikara, túúra; ~by, rúmíríria, rúmia, itíkira, túúra -itíkíria. abide, n. múcii, itíúra, gitúúro. abiding, a. -a gütúúra, -a gúkara, -tangíthira.
ability, n. ühoti, hinya, üügi. able, a. -hoti, -i na hinya müganu; ~bodied, -i na hinya mwíri; be ~, hota, già na hinya müganu.
abject, a. -kíar, -kíararu, -a kúiríkířúo; ~poverty, ükíia, ünyamari, üthínikí;
~person, ngíia, ngíararú, müimwo-ni-irí.
abjure, v.t. kaana na mwíhitwa, rega na mwíhitwa.
ablaze, a. be ~. akana, rírimbúka; (of a house) hía; (with anger) bucuna, búcúna, iha, akanwo, iyúřúo ní marakara, iyúřířířúo.
able, a. see under ability.
ablution, n. gwíthamba, kwíeria; ~s, methamba.
abnormal, a. -tarí -a ndüire, -geni, -kírite (kúneneha kana kúnyíha).
aboard, adv. & prep. meri-iní; ~a boat, macua-iní; ~a train, ngaari-iní ya mitambo; go ~, haica meri, macua, ngaari; put ~, haicia meri-iní, bokera meri-iní, kana ngaari-iní.
abode, see abide.
abolish, v.t. niina, niimükia, niina biú, ng'úria, ereria biú (buru, biri, butha, burutha). abolition, n. iníina, kúni-inwo, kúrindúúo.
abominate, v.t. thúúra múnó, thúúra ithika, iríkíra. abomination, n. kíndú gitíúúre múnó, ümaramari, ümaramaru, kíndú kíiríkire magigi. abominable, a. -thúúriku múnó, -i magigi; be ~, thúúrika múnó, iríkíra múnó, già magigi múnó.
aboriginal, a. -a kíhuma, -a kíumo, -a kímerero, -koníi wene thí tene.
aborigines, n.pl. andú aríia maarí ene thí kuuma tene.